

## 研究ノート

Kōda Aya: “*Dobutsu Chō: Inuzuki*”  
「動物帖・犬好き」  
“Animal Notebook: Being a Dog Lover”  
A Translation

Williams, Susan M.<sup>\*</sup>

## Preface

Japanese names are presented in the Japanese order, that is surname first and given name last. Other Japanese words are italicized except for those generally familiar to the English-speaking reader. The Hepburn system of Romanization has been used, but macrons have been employed to denote long vowels, with the exception of the names of well-known people or places such as Tokyo.

## Introduction

The two short passages that follow are taken from a new collection of Kōda Aya's works. This edition, published by Heibonsha (2010) is one of a series of new collections by this publisher.

The editors explain that the essays in this new volume, *Dobutsucho*, “Animal Notebook”, are based on the original ones in the collection *Kōda Aya Zenshu*, “The Complete Works of Kōda Aya”, vol.23, 1994-97, Iwanami Shoten, and adapted for the modern reader. This means that they have adopted the modern usage of the *hiragana* syllabary and modern, revised Chinese characters. In addition, characters which the editors believe may be difficult for the modern reader to recognise have had glosses added.

The editors also mention the problem of ‘inappropriate’ terminology. As in many languages, people's awareness of word usage changes, and over time some words are perceived as being derogatory or biased in some way and are no longer used in either spoken or written polite language. In English, for example, ‘crippled’ is no longer used to describe a person who is disabled, and so in

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Japanese, 'ohyakusho-san' 「お百姓さん」 is no longer considered the correct way to refer to a farmer, and a barber is no longer properly called a 'tokoya-san' 「床屋さん」, but is now a 'ribatsu-ten' 「理髪店」

These old-fashioned terms crop up in Aya's writing from time to time and the editors have decided to leave them as they are because they feel that they give 'atmosphere' to her prose and take the reader back more effectively to the time when the essays were written.

Aya's age and the year in which the essay was written have also been added at the end of each passage.

It is easy to see why the editors and the publishers made the decision to make these changes. It is so much easier to read and this has made Aya's works accessible to anyone who was educated after the late 1940s when the government made, as Nelson (1962) says,

"...phenomenal changes since the close of World War II. In 1946 the Japanese Government issued a list of 1,850 'Current Characters' (*Tōyō Kanji*) with the recommendation that publishers and writers confine themselves to these characters in an endeavour to simplify the written language".

While the author feels that the older forms definitely have a charm that is all their own and add to the beauty of Aya's prose, widening her readership can only be a positive move.

## Translation

### Being a Dog Lover

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### I Inherited it From my Father

I have heard it said that the more ways you know of enjoying yourself, the more likely you are to be happy in your old age. Since I am living alone in my declining years, to an outside observer I might appear to be lonely, but as a matter of fact there are a great deal of things that I enjoy doing. I have never suffered from boredom and most of my days are happy ones.

Ever since I was a child I have been very fond of plants and animals. My love of plants began with things like morning glories and soy bean plants; birds, with sparrows, crows and butcher-birds; fish, with killifish and animals, with dogs. I especially liked dogs. I didn't come around to liking dogs all by myself, it was a pleasure that my father taught me. I got it from him. They said that he loved dogs when he was a child and I think that he got it from his father too, although I can't really be sure of anything that far back.

He said that his first dog was "just one I found in the neighbourhood and I persuaded him to get used to me". It was probably a stray. Later too, at nineteen, when he went to start a new job as a

telegraph engineer with the post office in Hokkaido, he struck up a friendship with a small mongrel. He said that somebody had trained this dog to stand up on its hind legs and lick its nose and dance whenever it heard a 'kappore' comic song being played on the *shamisen*. The sight of this tiny little dog with its shiny black nose dancing to the 'kappore' in such a faraway place, surrounded by stormy seas and deep drifts of snow filled him with sadness.

It wasn't until he had become established as a writer that he took to keeping dogs with a good pedigree such as Setters or Pointers. He developed a passion for rifles and at the same time for dogs. So when he got a whippet it was a racing dog and by all accounts he was very attached to it. What is more, in between all the pedigree dogs, my father had one that was an Akita mix. This one, apart from having "nothing whatsoever to recommend it" was in the habit of biting people and he was at his wits' end to know what to do with it.

Being the father he was, it was only natural that he should teach his child about dogs. He taught me about St. Bernard's, Borzois and Chow-Chows by showing me pictures and photographs; the St. Bernard's a snowy forest setting, and Borzois in front of a roaring open fire, and he told me all about them.

In reality, however, the first dog that he got for me was completely different from such splendid canines. It was a mongrel and, it had been on its way to the pound to be put down when it escaped. My father was so impressed with this bid for freedom that he bought it on the spot. It was a male with a scruffy red coat. I was in second grade at the time.

This dog wouldn't let me tame him at all but whenever I went out he would follow me. One day, when I was on the way home after doing an errand, we had the bad luck to run into a bulldog that had been bred for dog fighting and a free-for-all started on a heap of gravel. Whatever you say, the other dog was a trained fighter and there was a huge difference in strength. Red refused to back down and battled on even though he was bleeding from one ear, while I madly yelled encouragement from the sidelines. He won. And so we made our way home. As we ran home side by side Red started to play with me, and all at once we were friends. The loneliness of being strangers and the joy of becoming pals. So child and dog were joined in friendship.

Ever since I have always loved dogs. Whenever I see a dog I'm always the first to smile. Then the dog smiles back nicely to say hello. Sometimes the dog may look a bit dubious as if to say,

"Well, who's this, then?"

Then I explain,

"It's nobody in particular. Just the old lady from around the corner."

And he'll say,

"That's who you are, is it? Just around the corner? Well, that's all right then. Lovely weather, isn't

it?”

To which I reply,

“It certainly is. It’s a nice day for people like us who enjoy good walking weather.”

And that’s how I have fun making friends with dogs.

Incidentally, cats look splendid when they are angry but dogs show a straight forward sincerity when they smile. At least, that’s how I see it. When I say that dogs smile some people laugh at me and say,

“You’re not normal!”

Well, I really believe they do smile.

(Aged 64, 1969)

### Rape Flowers

It was dusk. As you came out of the dimness of the bathroom into the garden, a great many yellow daffodils were blooming in the children’s flowerbed. They looked so pretty in the twilight. In the hedge, the flowers of the broom were yellow, too. The dog was stretched out there and when I called her only her tail moved. She was a pointer and a very intelligent dog. My stepmother wasn’t in the kitchen. The whole house was unpleasantly still. On the other side of the paper doors I heard somebody mention my name.

“Aya …”

Without thinking I stopped and listened to what they were saying. They were talking about sending me away somewhere. My father was saying,

“Hmm. Hmm. She won’t agree to it, you know. She won’t like that.”

I crept outside. My heart was beating so hard I felt it would leap right out of my breast. I went over to the field where it was quickly becoming dark. There, the overblown rape flowers were about to drop their petals in a dishevelled glory. They too, were yellow.

I crouched down. Then the flowers were taller than I was. A warm, diffusely- scented air had settled down around the plants.

I was going to be sent away. I was going to be banished from this house. The tales about stepmothers that I had been told at school and by the maids at home had become a reality and she was out to get me. I was in a panic, but I couldn’t move. It had got so dark that I was unable to see the flowers even if I brought my face up to them.

All of a sudden I felt something cold and wet against my cheek. It gave me a fright and then I realized it was the dog’s nose. She came and leaned up against me and licked and licked at my tears.

Sitting there we were exactly the same height. We sat there leaning against each other and I loved her from the bottom of my heart. There we sat, arms and paws all wrapped up together. Back at the house one of the maids started calling me,

"Miss, Miss?"

and the dog bounded away. After a little while, my little brother started calling me too,

"Aya?"

I lay on the ground in a furrow between the plants and sobbed. It was pitch-dark and I was heartbroken. My stepmother and father came out to look for me.

"Ayako! Ayako!" my father called.

I was desperate. I was convince that they were about to get rid of me but my father's voice drew me to him.

"Daddy! Please, please! I don't want to be sent away" I begged as I collapsed in a heap on the ground.

When he pulled me up I clung to him for dear life and wouldn't let him go.

(Aged 44, 1949)

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## Research Notes

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This paper is a translation of two short essays in a new edition of Kōda Aya’s essays entitled, *Kōda Aya: Dōbutsu Chō*, “Animal Notes”. This edition is one of a series edited by Aya’s daughter, Aoki Tama. Other titles include, *Kōda Aya: Shitsuke Chō*, *Kōda Aya: Daidokoro Chō*, *Kōda Aya: Kimono Chō*, *Kōda Aya: Kiseki no Chō*, and *Kōda Aya: Tabi no Chō*. Selected essays have been taken from the *Kōda Aya Zenshu* “The Complete Works of Kōda Aya” and rearranged under the above headings rather than chronologically.

These new editions have also made the work more accessible to the modern reader by using newer, post-World War II forms of Chinese Characters and *kana*.

It might be assumed that this would make a difference to the interpretation and ‘atmosphere’ of Aya’s prose and this translation represents a preliminary step towards an investigation of this assumption.